



**CIVIC ATLANTA**

By Crystal Edmonson | Senior Editor, Community Outreach and Live Journalism

cedmonson@bizjournals.com  
404-249-1005  
@crystaledmonson

**WESTSIDE**

**BELOVED BENEFIT NAMES LINEUP OF CORPORATE SUPPORTERS**

The 2023 Beloved Benefit is attracting some serious star power aside from the headliner, John Legend.

Corporate executives from Atlanta's notable businesses and nonprofits have signed on to serve as co-chairs and presenters for the August 24 fundraiser at the Georgia World Congress Center.

Beloved Benefit co-chairs are Peach Bowl Inc. CEO Gary Stokan and his wife, Tia; and Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation President Fay Twersky and her wife, Jill Blair.

Others with important roles in the event include The Home Depot CEO Ted Decker and his wife, Cathy; Georgia Power CEO Kim Greene and her husband, Ted; and Chick-fil-A, Inc. President Tim Tassopoulos and his wife, Maria.

"All of these organizations have been strong supporters of the Beloved Benefit and their leaders are well-known for investing time and talents to community organizations across the city and state," Rodney Bullard, CEO of The Same House, said in a statement.

The Beloved Benefit is a nod to Atlanta's native son, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who popularized the concept of the Beloved Community where poverty, hunger, prejudice and other ills are replaced by peace, reconciliation and care for others. The fundraising event has raised more than \$12 million for nonprofits that mostly serve Atlanta's Westside communities. The Same House, which will put on the Beloved Benefit this year and into the future, launched in January. It is a new community service organization created to promote economic mobility.



JOHN R. LEWIS LEGACY INSTITUTE  
**Rodney Bullard, CEO of The Same House, named in honor of the late Rep. John Lewis.**



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL GEORGIA

QuikTrip awarded St. Vincent de Paul Georgia just over \$1 million to expand its Motel to Home program.

**\$1M GIFT WILL EXPAND LOCAL HOUSING EFFORT**

**Motel to Home program on track to help 200 families**

Summer is a popular time to book a hotel stay, and this year, demand is up as Covid-weary consumers look to get out of town.

But for a growing number of people, a hotel or motel is not for vacation but for basic shelter.

"We've had families [in motels] three months, some are there longer than four years," Mariel Risner Sivley, director of housing initiatives for St. Vincent de Paul Georgia, told Atlanta Business Chronicle.

The organization aims to reduce the number of families living in motel rooms (which have fewer amenities than hotels), by providing a pathway to housing through its Motel to

Home program.

In June, the group received a \$1 million grant from QuikTrip (QT). Employees of the convenience store and gas station operator see first-hand the impact of homelessness and crime, and because of that, supporting the program "just made sense," said Lauren Sherry, community relations manager at QT, calling the program a "powerful, cost-effective solution."

St. Vincent de Paul estimates some Atlanta-area families are paying \$540 per week for a basic motel room. The median price to rent a 1-bedroom apartment in Atlanta is \$1,752 per month.

"All of these people have jobs and have income, they just can't get over those barriers like credit history, and don't know how to begin," said Mike Mies, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia.

The program pays for typical upfront rental expenses including application fees, first

**100**

Families moved from motel rooms to rentals January-May.

**510**

The average credit score of people entering the Motel to Home program.

**\$17.70**

Average salary per hour of participants when they first enter the program.

Source: St. Vincent de Paul Georgia

month's rent, utility connections and security deposits. It also provides classes and other services for 12 months after the family moves into an apartment.

The bulk of the families involved in the program are in Gwinnett and DeKalb counties. The QT grant will allow St. Vincent de Paul to expand the program to 12 counties across the metro area.

This year, Motel to Home is on track to secure housing for more than 200 families. By 2025, the program could support as many 425 families.

Motel to Home started in 2019 as a pilot program with 13 families in Norcross. Today, Mies said each of those families is still in stable housing. He credits the organization's monthly check-ins with case workers, quarterly workshops and peer support groups. "Our goal isn't just to get them into a stable home," he said, "but to make sure they can stay there."